

MANAGING WORK FROM HOME REQUESTS - WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO KNOW

Working from home requests are increasing as employees navigate rising living costs, commuting pressures and changing expectations about how work is done.

For employers, this creates a real challenge — how do you remain fair, compliant and practical, while still supporting your people?

You need to balance operational requirements, team dynamics and individual circumstances, all while ensuring consistency across your business.

There's no one-size-fits-all answer.

While employees can request flexibility, employers must assess what is reasonable for the role and the impact on the business.

The key is taking a balanced, considered approach.

1 Are employees entitled?

Employees may request flexible work under the Fair Work Act, but cost of living pressures alone do not create an automatic right to work from home.

Employers are still required to properly consider requests and respond within the required timeframe (21 days).

2 Can you say no?

Yes — if there are reasonable business grounds such as operational impact, supervision needs, or the requirement to be on-site.

If declining, employers must clearly explain the reasons and, where possible, discuss alternative options with the employee.

3 What should you consider?

Review the role requirements, team impact, customer needs and whether alternative arrangements could be implemented.

Consistency is important — similar roles should be treated in a similar way to avoid perceptions of unfairness.

4 What's the better approach?

Think beyond yes or no — hybrid work, flexible hours or temporary arrangements can often provide a practical solution for both parties.

Open conversations and a willingness to explore options can significantly improve employee engagement and trust.

Managing Work From Home Requests Checklist



Assess the Request

Review the employee's request and understand what flexibility is being asked for, including frequency, duration and reason.



Check Eligibility

Determine whether the employee is eligible to request flexible work under the Fair Work Act or if it is a general or other type of request.



Review the Role Requirements

Consider whether the role can be performed remotely and identify any operational or customer impacts.



Consider Business Needs

Assess team structure, supervision requirements, productivity expectations and how the request may affect others.



Explore Alternative Options

If work from home isn't suitable in full, consider hybrid arrangements, flexible hours or temporary adjustments.



Assess Reasonable Business Grounds

If declining the request, ensure the decision is based on valid operational reasons (business needs) that can be clearly explained.



Communicate the Decision Clearly

Provide a clear, timely response outlining the outcome, reasons and any alternative arrangements offered.



Support Employee Wellbeing

Recognise potential financial or personal pressures and check in with the employee where appropriate.



Offer Non-Financial Support

Consider all flexible work options, additional leave, recognition or development opportunities to support employees.



Document the Outcome

Keep a record of the request, decision and reasoning to ensure consistency and reduce risk.